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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001298

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: ASEC PGOV PREL KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: NCP EAGER FOR CONTINUED BILATERAL TALKS, FLEXIBLE
ON CONTENT AND VENUE

REF: KHARTOUM 1092

Classified By: A/CDA Mark Asquino for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) During meetings with A/CDA Asquino and polchief August 25, two senior NCP regime insiders expressed a strong desire to resume bilateral discussions with the US. MFA U/S (and senior NCP official) Mutriff Siddiq told us that while the NCP would like another round of bilateral talks soon, the regime would like there to be additional discussion of "deeper, strategic" items of interest to the US and Sudan, not just the more "transitory" issues of UNAMID deployment and humanitarian access. Siddiq clarified that "the short term issues are important to us too, and we are committed at senior levels to implementing them," but that the regime would like to talk about longer-term issues as well. Siddiq also pointed out that "since the US walked out of the talks last time, the US should indicate its proposals" for a renewed round of talks.

¶2. (C) NCP strategist (and CPA negotiator) Yehia Bebiker went further, urging that a renewed round of bilateral talks should address "fundamental points of concern" between Sudan and the US "like the four-point Danforth initiative that started the CPA process." Bebiker noted that these points actually came from an earlier proposal during the Clinton administration, and urged that the US and Sudan take a long-term view of efforts to improve relations. Bebiker said the NCP has no particular preference on where talks might occur, indicating that they could be held inside or outside Sudan, "depending on how much media exposure is acceptable." He noted that there would be more media exposure in Sudan, but holding discussions here would demonstrate that "things are normal" and it's not necessary to leave Sudan to hold discussions.

¶3. (C) Bebiker urged that the US should "propose a solution to Darfur" in the same way that the US proposed a solution to the North-South war. Bebiker said he believes the time is right for such an initiative, and suggested that "the US can help and get the credit." Taking this logic one step further, Bebiker suggested that SE Williamson propose a deal linked to the ICC indictment process. "This is the way diplomacy works, when things are driven to the brink, there is the possibility for a package deal," urged Bebiker. The A/CDA and polchief replied that as SE Williamson had made clear during his recent visit to Sudan, no such "package deal" was in the offing.

Bashir Trip to Juba - Hydro Development and Darfur Plans

¶4. (C) Bebiker said President Bashir would travel to Juba this week to discuss CPA implementation issues and the "People's Initiative on Darfur." Bebiker expects that the President will announce "the main features of the Darfur initiative" by the end of the week, and likely plans to discuss the final proposal with FVP Kiir in Juba. Bashir also plans to inaugurate several hydroelectric dam projects in the South. Siddiq also confirmed that the President's Darfur Initiative would be announced "within a matter of days." Siddiq said that most of the major political forces had signed on, including the Umma party and the DUP, but that some coordination with the SPLM is required "given the SPLM's different vision for Darfur."

Comment

¶5. (C) Not surprisingly, the regime sees tremendous opportunity in continued bilateral talks with the US, especially if the talks come in advance of a possible Article 16 resolution at the Security Council. Moreover, the regime is expressing a clear interest in a long-term "strategic" focus to renewed bilateral talks that would lay the groundwork for continued US engagement down the road. In other words, the Sudanese want to know what it will take to get off the State Sponsors of Terrorism List and to reduce or eliminate economic sanctions. The regime is nervous about a shift in US policy under a new administration, and would like to have a framework for continued engagement in place before January 2008. Post suggests that this would be an ideal time to seek maximum concessions from the regime without linking the talks to the ICC process in any way. The risk is that

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the regime will promise anything and deliver little, but in the interest of stability in Sudan and the region and continued humanitarian delivery in Darfur and development in the South, such a discussion with the GOS deserves serious consideration.

ASQUINO